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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General*

Addendum

II. Replies received from States

G. Italy

[Original: English]
[10 September 2003]

1. The strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean is a top priority. This is particularly true in the light of the continued presence of crisis situations in the area and other questions closely followed by Italy, such as the fight against organized crime and illegal immigration. In that regard, anti-organized crime agreements and measures to counter illegal immigration have been stipulated recently with such countries as Turkey, Cyprus and Malta.

2. Political cooperation and security measures among countries in the Mediterranean region are one of the main objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, to which the European Union (EU) member countries and the 12 Mediterranean third countries currently belong. The Partnership was established in Barcelona in 1995 and has three different components (cooperation in politics and in matters of security; economic cooperation; and cooperation in the social, human and cultural areas). The ultimate goal of the Partnership is to create a common area of peace, stability and shared prosperity, and to promote dialogue among the various societies and cultures of the region.

* The information contained herein was received after submission of the main report.

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3. From the outset, all the partner countries have paid special attention to questions relating to security, the fight against terrorism, international criminality, and illicit trafficking in weapons and drugs. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 helped to strengthen the commitment of States to the objective of security and to renew the commitment of all the actors in the area to targeted actions and concrete, useful steps at the regional level. That is particularly important in view of the wider discussion in the United Nations context on drafting a general convention on terrorism.

4. These considerations are reflected in the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2003. On that occasion, emphasis was given to a meaningful political dialogue between the EU and neighbouring countries and the need to insert clauses referring to the fight against terrorism in bilateral agreements between the EU and Mediterranean third countries. That trend was reaffirmed by the conclusions of the Mid-Term Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held in Crete from 26 to 27 May 2003, and by the presidency conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council, held on 19 and 20 June 2003. The partner countries not only condemned terrorism and violence but also reiterated their commitment to preventative diplomacy, conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as the promotion of instruments for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They also underlined the need to ratify international instruments on arms control.

5. There has also been regional attention to these problems in forums smaller than the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Such is the case with cooperation between Mediterranean countries participating in the Mediterranean Forum (Algeria, Egypt, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia, France, Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal) and in the framework of the 5 + 5 Dialogue (Italy, France, Malta, Spain, Portugal, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Mauritania). On those occasions, States have stepped up their cooperation in the area of security, peace and stability. The following issues have recently been discussed: States' ratification of international counter-terrorism instruments (especially the 12 international conventions on terrorism); greater monitoring to prevent and suppress financing of terrorism acts (through such instruments as the GAFI in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe); and the follow-up to the counter-terrorism code of conduct adopted by the countries belonging to the Mediterranean Forum during the Mykonos Conference of 20 and 21 May 2002.

6. The EU has recently reiterated its commitment to security in the Mediterranean area and has included in its basic principles for an EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction a specific item that explicitly states that Europe is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean and should pay particular attention to the issue of proliferation in the Mediterranean area. That concept has been further developed in the action plan for the implementation of the basic principles, one of whose measures focuses on the Mediterranean area and states that the EU must proceed to a weapons of mass destruction threat assessment focused on the Mediterranean area and include specific non-proliferation issues in the EU dialogue with Mediterranean countries with a view to ensuring wider adherence to the main non-proliferation and arms control treaties.